

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

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FOR AMBASSADOR FROM AF

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ACOM, PFOR, CM

SUBJECT: WATTS BASE STATION

REFS: (A) YAOUNDE 2426; (B) YAOUNDE 2417

1. WATTS SURVEY TEAM WHICH VISITED YAOUNDE AND DOUALA BETWEEN JUNE 8 AND 12 FAVORS DOUALA, FROM TECHNICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE VIEWPOINT, OVER ALL OTHER POSTS SURVEYED ON THE TRIP.

2. BUREAU NOTES AMBASSADOR'S OPINION THAT REQUEST FOR LOCATING WATTS STATION IN CAMEROON WOULD RECEIVE FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION BY GURC, IF PROPERLY HANDLED.

3. BEFORE
PROCEEDING WITH CONSIDERATION OF DOUALA AS POSSIBLE SITE,
BUREAU WOULD LIKE TO EXPLORE AS THOROUGHLY AS POSSIBLE THE
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NEAR AND LONG-TERM POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF SUCH A MOVE,

PARTICULARLY:

(A) WHAT IS PUBLIC REACTION LIKELY TO BE TO A HIGHLY VISIBLE FOREST OF ANTENNAE? COULD IT PROVOKE ACCUSATIONS (DISINTERESTED OR OTHERWISE) THAT BASE IS MORE THAN SIMPLE

DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATIONS RELAY STATION? COULD COMMUNIST-SUPPORTED UPC OR OTHER DISSIDENT GROUPS SEIZE UPON ISSUE AS MEANS OF EMBARRASSING GURC? COULD PRESS, STUDENT GROUPS AND INTELLECTUALS EXERT PRESSURE ON GURC AND IN THIS EVENT WOULD GURC HOLD FIRM?

(B) WHAT WILL GURC DEMAND AS QUID PRO QUO? AMBASSADOR'S VIEW THAT CAMEROON MAY BE SEEKING REGIONAL "PARTNERSHIP" ROLE WITH US AGAINST THREAT POSED BY COMMUNIST "ENCIRCLEMENT" (REFTELS) SUGGESTS ONE APPROACH TO PROBLEM. IN YOUR VIEW, WHAT WOULD BE THE PRICE TO USG OF SUCH PARTNERSHIP? IN THIS REGARD, YOU SHOULD CONSIDER NOT ONLY WHAT GURC MIGHT ASK NOW, IN RETURN FOR INSTALLATION OF BASE, BUT ALSO WHAT IT IS LIKELY TO ASK LATER, IN RETURN FOR BASE'S CONTINUED OPERATION.

(C) WHAT WOULD BE THE LIKELY EFFECT OF A CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN CAMEROON? APPARENT STABILITY OF AHIDJO REGIME AND "INSTITUTIONALIZATION" OF GOVERNMENT ARE ENCOURAGING FACTORS. HOWEVER PRESSURES FROM LEFT FOR REMOVAL OF AHIDJO SEEM TO BE GROWING. IN EVENT HE IS REPLACED WHAT WOULD BE LIKELY ATTITUDE OF NEW GOVERNMENT TOWARDS WATTS BASE?

4. BUREAU RECOGNIZES THESE QUESTIONS DO NOT ADMIT OF EASY ANSWERS, BUT AMBASSADOR'S COMMENTS WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL IN REACHING BUREAU JUDGMENT.

5. FYI FACILITY WOULD REQUIRE SUITABLE HOUSING FOR SOME 30 FAMILIES. INITIAL CONTINGENT WOULD CONSIST OF 15 EMPLOYEES WITH THE REMAINDER BEING PHASED IN WITHIN A 2-YEAR PERIOD. IS SUCH HOUSING AVAILABLE? KISSINGER

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